

Editorial

Financial aid cuts deplete number of poor collegians

Want some evidence that financial aid cuts decrease the availability of higher education to low-income students? A study by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities found that more blacks and Hispanics are graduating from high school, but the percentage of that group attending college has decreased, according to an article in Thursday's USA Today.

The report said the reason for that decrease is money. "Education grants for the poor haven't kept pace with increases in money for loans, attractive to middle-class students," the article said.

The report said federal grant ceilings have not increased proportionately with inflation. The maximum grant was \$1,600 in 1974; it is now \$1,900. To keep up with inflation, the ceiling should have been raised to \$3,000.

Perhaps the most striking figure the association's report released shows a 7.9 percent increase in federal aid to white students between 1978 and 1983, and a 4.7 decrease in aid to black students over the same period.

Further cuts proposed this year will lend momentum to that trend. The cuts, supported by Secretary of Education William Bennett, will decrease loan and grant funds and place a \$4,000 ceiling on all aid for anyone.

All this means we are moving toward an even more elitist philosophy of education. Higher education, it appears, is for the rich. More than ever before, higher education is essential to upward mobility. Therefore, opportunity for advancement — or even life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — is becoming ever more limited to the wealthy.

That the pattern of distributing financial aid in the recent past and the prospectus for the availability of financial aid in the very near future compromise equality and American principles is simply not debatable. The aforementioned report's figures scream inequality, discrimination and denial of opportunity. And the "reason" and "justification" posited by Bennett, who cannot be called a friend of education, are merely excuses.

Students who can't get loans will have to give up their new cars, Bennett says. The \$4,000-aid limit will mean low-income students will not be able to go to their first choice of schools, and proposed cuts will free grant money for lower-income students, he said.

As many students who depend on loans know, the new car argument is a lot of bunk. As students also know, \$4,000 will almost buy a year at UNL, unless you have some other substantial source of funds, and it won't even get you one class at Harvard.

What the aid cuts do is effectively exclude otherwise qualified low-income students from the best schools. That is bad policy because it is contrary to the Constitution, and because it decreases the pool of intelligent people on which our nation must draw to solve the problems of today and tomorrow.

Furthermore, cuts won't provide more grant money for low-income students; that implies a transfer of funds, while the cuts are in actuality aimed at depleting funds, thus decreasing expenditures.

Bennett's arguments merely throw a smoke screen over what is in truth, intentional or not, a program of legislating discrimination by making higher education unavailable to low-income Americans. The program takes education off the roll of rights and places it on the roll of rich man's privileges.

Wealthy people may remain America's greatest resource. The rest are being demoted somewhere below bituminous coal.

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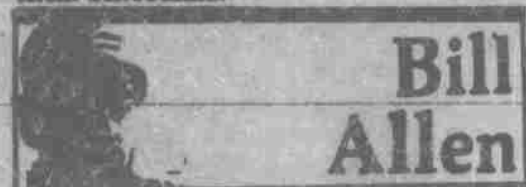
BEN SARGENT
Writes The Daily Nebraskan

Mythical state enforces two 'seat' laws

Two policemen pull up to a stoplight in a mythical state that has a ridiculous seatbelt law.

"Hey Elroy," one patrolman says to his partner, "that thar boy don't look like he's got no seatbelt on."

"Quick, hit the siren Eugene. Give me them binoculars."



Bill Allen

Tom, a 20-year-old college criminal in every respect hears the siren and casually buckles his seatbelt as he pulls to the curb.

"Out of the car, boy."

"Sorry, officer, but it might take a minute. You see, I'm all strapped in."

"You didn't have that on a minute ago at the stop sign."

"I beg your pardon officer, sir, but I always wear my seatbelt. It's the law you know."

The two burly officers drag the screaming student from his car, breaking his seatbelt and beating him to a bloody pulp, reacting mostly to the frustrations of trying to enforce unenforceable laws.

Later, Tom, smoking a joint, tells his friends of the incident.

"It's a stupid law, man," Rosco says, "I never wear my seatbelt."

"I do," Shelley says, taking a hit from the doobie, "but not because it's the law. I just think it's safer. I'm smart enough to know that."

"Aw, get out of here," they all say.

The next day, in this same mythical state with the silly laws, our public servants Eugene and Elroy are at it again with the binoculars.

"Look in that house Elroy. Looks like single-ply to me."

The officers, acting on a reasonable cause, break down the front door and crash through the bathroom door, surprising the elderly lady finishing a common act.

"Oh my, goodness me," she says, trying to hide the single-ply toilet paper, which is against the law in our mythical state for safety reasons. It scratches, you know. But it's less expensive and on her budget, the elderly Viola has a tough time making ends meet, so to speak.

"Looks like resisting arrest to me, Eugene."

Later, while smoking a joint, she tells her friends of the incident.

"I know two-ply is safer and easier on you," she says, "but this is America girls, and I didn't think the government could tell you what to do with your own life."

"Oh, girl," Harriet says, "Don't you know that government officials these days care nothing about citizens. If so, why are

government offices open from 9 to 4:30? Hell, everybody works during those hours."

"You're right," Florence says, "And why the inconsistencies? If they can make me wear a seatbelt and make my buy two-ply toilet paper, for my own health, then why don't they ban cigarettes, or alcohol, or handguns, which are equally as dangerous in their own way?"

"Special interest groups!" Harriet says, "and no alcohol or cigarettes means no sales taxes to squander away on young folks."

"It sure looks good on a state senator's record," Viola says, passing the joint, "to support a law so much concerned with the public good, regardless whether it is unconstitutional, or whether it takes away from our basic freedom of choice. Dammit, girls, I like single-ply toilet paper. I was raised on it. Nobody squeezed Charmin when I was a girl."

"Besides," Harriet says, quite high now, "those droopy-eyed public servants in the state capitol building have nothing better to do than pass "public good" laws in our mythical state, now that the farmers and educators are well paid, now that we have a strong university, and now that we have a video lottery in every sleepy pool hall. They have nothing better to do with their time. Heck, they might as well be asleep."

See, dear readers, I wish our real state was so fortunate.

'Kept promises' could gain ASUN credibility

Now that the ASUN (I promise — not a single 'Gesundheit') elections are over (give or take a lawsuit), I thought I would use this week's column and my marvelous sense of timing to give my personal reflections on the whole process. This may be late, but I figure people are always more ready to listen after the dust has settled than they are when the fur is flying (I got an A+ in Metaphor Mizing 217).



James Sennett

There seem to be three major camps when it comes to ASUN elections and the whole student government issue in general. There are those who are totally cynical about the structure and take every chance they get, especially at election time, to ridicule, degenerate and otherwise mean-mouth ASUN. Then there are the three thousand or so who really believe in student government — they form parties, nominate candidates, campaign, debate,

discuss and listen to issues and even vote!

Finally, there is the vast majority of the student body that doesn't give a rip — the people who sleep over the campaign articles to get to "Bloom County" and those beloved personals. These are the people who think Look is a magazine, Target is a department store and Change is what you get back from your five dollar bill when you buy Look at Target. These are the nameless thousands who don't consider student government vital enough even to take five minutes to vote.

I would love to address all three segments separately, but space is precious. So, given that apathy is the extreme form of cynicism, I will address the first and the third together. (Besides, it takes longer to read this article than it did to vote, so I don't know how many of the third group are with me anyway!)

First to the cynics. Man, I love your style. I was born with the world in one hand and a magnifying glass in the other

— I don't take anything at face value either. But the danger of cynicism is that it too often breeds total contempt and despair. My complaint to you takes the form of the reply which the great preacher Dwight L. Moody gave to those who criticized his evangelistic techniques. He said, "Well, I like the way I'm doing it a whole lot better than the way you're not doing it." Touche. Goldstein, Burke, Keating and the whole gang can find you guilty on this charge.

At least these guys are working within the parameters the system allows to get things done. It may be imperfect, flawed, and generally less than expected, but it is something. They have willed to act. To dig up a tired old cliché, they'd rather do something and fail than do nothing and succeed. Maybe there are resume-stuffers and status-seekers among them, but motivations to positive action are seldom totally ulterior. Give the kids a break — they are (cliche time again!) giving it the old college try.

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